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## Shelling Yourself Short?

Not a day goes by that I don't eat nuts in some form. I spread peanut butter on celery, pile roasted almonds on my hot cereal, and even stir pecans into my chocolate pudding. Sometimes I wonder whether my students who catch me eating such snacks snicker "Yeah, she's the *nutty* professor" behind my back.

But I'm not offended; nuts are what my body needs. Yours, too.

Long avoided because of their fatty reputation, nuts make a perfect food for runners. Besides heart-healthy fat, nuts are packed with fiber, protein, and an array of vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals that can help ward off chronic ailments and help you recover faster after tough workouts.

### In a Nutshell

Back in the days of saber-toothed tigers, humans often ate the seeds of certain trees, such as almonds, pistachios, and walnuts, along with peanuts, which are actually the seeds of a tropical bean plant. Of course, these early humans ate nuts because they were easy to find, satisfied hunger, and tasted good. Since those days, we've learned much more about what nuts have to offer. Here's the anatomy of a nut:

**Fat:** A staggering 75 percent of a nut's calories come from fat, most of it the heart-healthy monounsaturated type. (Coconuts are the one exception; they're loaded with artery-clogging saturated fats.) Walnuts also contain some omega-3 fats, similar to the fats in fish that help fight off age-related ailments such as heart disease and cancer.

**Protein:** About 10 to 25 percent of a nut's weight is protein, with a 1-ounce serving of peanuts supplying about the same amount of protein as a glass of milk. While not as protein-rich as soybeans or meat, nuts supply valuable amino acids that you need for muscle repair and heart health. Combine nuts with grains and grain products such as bread, cooked rice, or oats for all of the amino acids your body needs.

**Fiber:** A 1-ounce serving of nuts (see "What a Nut" at right) offers 1.5 to 4.5 grams of fiber, which helps lower blood-cholesterol levels and fend off cancer.

**Vitamins:** Nuts are one of the few rich food sources of vitamin E. A serving of almonds, for example, contains a hefty 35

## What a Nut

Here's how various nuts stack up for each 1-ounce serving.

	Calories	Fat (g)	Calories from fat	Protein (g)	Fiber (g)
<b>Almonds</b> 20 to 24 nuts	170	14	126	5.5	3.5
<b>Brazil nuts</b> 8 nuts	190	19	171	4.0	1.5
<b>Cashews</b> 18 nuts	160	13	117	4.5	2.0
<b>Coconut</b> 2½ Tbsp.	185	18**	162	2	4.5
<b>Hazelnuts</b> 12 nuts	180	18	162	3.5	2.0
<b>Macadamia</b> 12 nuts	200	20	180	2.5	2.0
<b>Peanuts</b> 35 pieces	160	13.5	122	7.0	2.0
<b>Pecans</b> 15 halves	190	19	171	2.5	2.0
<b>Pistachios</b> 47 nuts	160	14	126	5.0	3.0
<b>Walnuts</b> 14 halves	180	18***	162	4.0	3.0

\*\*Almost 90 percent of the fat is saturated.

\*\*\*About two-thirds of the total fat in walnuts is made up of essential fats such as omega-3s.

